

# ND PROJECT MANAGEMENT NEWS

A Newsletter for Project Managers

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Welcome to the fourth issue of the *North Dakota Project Management News*! The purpose of this newsletter is to bring you information about project management-related topics and events in North Dakota (ND) Government and Higher Education.

## PM News

### **Enterprise Project Management Website Launched**

The EPM Website was successfully launched on August 1, 2004! The site is designed to guide the Project Management novice to helpful training and resources, while providing the experienced project manager with the tools to manage virtually any size or type of project. Some highlights of the EPM Website include the North Dakota Project Management Guidebook, links to on-going enterprise projects and initiatives, training and certification resources, standards and policies, and the Enterprise Project Sharing System. The website may be accessed via the Policy and Planning section of the ITD website, or you may go directly to [www.state.nd.us/epm](http://www.state.nd.us/epm). Don't forget to bookmark this site and visit it often!

### **ND Project Management Guidebook Released in Draft Format**

The ND Project Management Guidebook has been placed on the EPM website, in draft format, for a 30-day comment period. The EPM Advisory Group has spent many hours converting and fine tuning this guide to meet the needs of project managers in North Dakota.

The ND Project Management Guidebook is intended for use by ND State Government and Higher Education, but can be adapted for any project. It is based on the New York State Government Project Management Guidebook. While we do not encourage printing the entire guidebook until it is released in final form, we do encourage you to take the opportunity to review it now. Please feel free to forward any comments or suggestions to [epmadmin@state.nd.us](mailto:epmadmin@state.nd.us).



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## Ask the EPM Advisory Group

**Question** – In developing the business case for a project, we are asked to identify the risks of doing the project. I have found and documented numerous risks of “not doing” the project (e.g. our mainframe application is 25 years old and failing). How do I identify and document legitimate risks of “doing” the project when we haven’t even started yet?

**Answer** – This is a great question, and one that many project managers struggle with. Too many times we get caught up in trying to identify risks that might be too specific to the project, or product of the project. At this stage, risks are more global and can be related to overall organizational management issues, potential vendor issues, fiscal issues, etc. Once you have taken these risks into account, it is OK to also include the risks related to the application, or “product” of the project.

Examples of risks that might impact your potential project at this stage could include:

### Organizational

- Inadequate staff resources
- Organizational changes impact scope and/or schedule
- Lack of qualified Subject Matter Experts
- Lack of consensus on approach by internal stakeholders
- Lack of end user buy-in (end user does not utilize the product as intended)
- Volatility of the business process (will your BP change before your project is initiated)
- Sponsor lacks understanding/commitment to Project Management

### Vendor

- No vendors will bid on the project
- Bids are substantially higher than projected budget
- Vendor stability
- Vendor management (who will manage the vendor)

### Fiscal

- Inadequate Resources will be allocated for the project
- Project budget exceeds original estimate

### Product

- Product does not support present business processes
- Product technology is not supported by existing organizational IT structure

Note that all of the risks identified are in some manner tied to budget, schedule, scope and/or quality. A plan to minimize the impact of these constraints should be identified.

Since the Business Case is often viewed as a sales pitch for an idea, it is diffi-



cult for the author to justify including these types of risks. It is much easier to point out the risks of not doing the project, as they directly support your objective of getting the project approved. However, it is critical at this stage to also identify potential pitfalls so you can begin planning for them.

*The ND Enterprise Project Management (EPM) Advisory Group is a small workgroup of project managers who proactively identify project management issues, and assist in the collection and development of project management best practices such as tools and templates. Have a question for the EPM Advisory Group? Send it to Mark Molesworth at [epmadmin@state.nd.us](mailto:epmadmin@state.nd.us).*

## Featured PM Web Sites

### North Dakota State Government Enterprise Project Management (EPM) Web Site

What is EPM?

Enterprise Project Management is a process that coordinates projects across the enterprise and provides project management guidance to all agencies.

EPM seeks to provide the following benefits:

- Instill best practices to maximize project successes and leverage expensive project expertise resources.
- Provide expertise and support to project managers.
- Provide ongoing process improvement approaches that, over time, will provide an even greater chance for successful projects.

<http://www.state.nd.us/epm>

### PMI Registered Education Providers

Registered Education Providers (REP) are organizations approved by PMI to offer project management training for Professional Development Units (PDU).

[http://www.pmi.org/info/PDC\\_REPOverviewFile.asp](http://www.pmi.org/info/PDC_REPOverviewFile.asp)

### TechRepublic – Project Management FAQ

As many IT pros know, you can be asked to manage a project at most any time. If you're not a student of the methodology, you may find yourself with many questions. We hope to help you with those by providing these frequently asked questions and their answers.

<http://techrepublic.com.com/5100-6315-5236244.html>

## Featured PM Article

### Getting to Done

Opinion by Paul Glen



I'm frequently called upon to help figure out what to do with a project that might be in trouble. Of course, determining whether a project is in trouble is often not a trivial problem. We like to talk about troubled projects as if there were a single bit that visibly flipped from one to zero, but unfortunately it's not that easy.

While the symptoms presented vary widely, there are a few questions that I

always ask to help determine whether the project is indeed in trouble. Some questions are deceptively simple with surprisingly subtle answers. Perhaps the most important is, “How will you know when you’re done?”

One thing that all projects have in common is that they are (or at least are intended to be) temporary. They should have a conclusion. So theoretically, this should be a rather easy question to answer, but it’s usually greeted with blank stares followed by one of four standard responses:

**Response 1:** “We’re done when the quality of the product meets our standards.” This is the idealistic response, the “we’ll sell no wine before its time” approach.

**Response 2:** “We’re done when the product fulfills the requirements.” This is the legalistic response, the “we’re done when we’ve completed the minimum required by the letter of the law” approach.

**Response 3:** “We’re done when we reach the schedule deadline.” This is the schedule-driven, pragmatic response, the “we’re taking it to the trade show whether it’s ready or not” approach.

**Response 4:** “We’re done when we run out of money.” This is the budget-driven response, the “our CFO won’t give us any more money, so we’d better just roll it out” approach.

Unfortunately, none of these responses captures the subtle reality of IT work. We don’t have a simple answer to the “What does ‘done’ mean?” question. We don’t have a physical product with physical properties. It’s considerably easier to discern when a bridge is done. Does it span the gorge? Is it painted? Will it withstand the traffic we anticipate for it?

For IT projects, there’s only one real way to tell when a system is truly done. That’s when all the stakeholders in the system agree that it’s done. Each group must certify that the project sufficiently addresses its concerns. Among other criteria, they must agree that the project meets enough of the requirements, is ready when necessary, is deployable, is supportable and will be accepted by the users. In short, in the absence of physical evidence of completion, “done” is fundamentally a political decision, not a technical one.

A different yet related deceptively simple question is, “Do you think that the team has the skills to complete this project?” This one is usually answered with a list of the technical skills of the team members.

Of course, technical skills are important for getting to done, but clearly they’re not sufficient if we understand that “done” is defined politically, not technically. There are other equally important skills for building the consensus required for success. They include the following:

**Listening.** Do the team members have the ability to listen carefully for both technical and business requirements? Can they hear both the issues and the feelings that surround those issues? Can they confirm what they hear to

ensure that they haven't misunderstood?

**Identifying interests.** Do the team members have the ability not only to hear what the stakeholders are saying, but also to anticipate and interpret their interests? Can they understand what may be driving the requests and demands that they hear?

**Managing constructive conflict.** Does the group have the ability to engage in the constructive conflict required for building consensus? Can it deal with the conflicting demands of stakeholders? Can it reconcile the emotional needs of stakeholders?

**Negotiating trade-offs.** And finally, can the team manage the negotiating process required to build consensus? IT projects are now the gridiron on which corporate politics are played. As systems become integral to business processes, turf battles may be negotiated during the requirements and acceptance phases of projects.

So when you contemplate your next project, consider not just the launch of the project, but how the team will get to "done." When you think about the end first, you've got a better chance of getting there.

*Paul Glen is the author of the award-winning book "Leading Geeks: How to Manage and Lead People Who Deliver Technology" (Jossey Bass Pfeiffer, 2003) and Principal of C2 Consulting. C2 Consulting helps IT management solve people problems. Paul Glen regularly speaks for corporations and national associations across North America. For more information go to [www.c2-consulting.com](http://www.c2-consulting.com). He can be reached at [info@c2-consulting.com](mailto:info@c2-consulting.com).*

#### ND PROJECT MANAGEMENT NEWS

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North Dakota Information Technology Department  
600 E. Boulevard Ave.  
Department 112  
Bismarck, ND 58505-0100  
(701) 328-3190  
Fax: (701) 328-3000  
1-800-366-6888 TTY  
1-800-366-6889 VOICE  
<http://discovernd.com/epm/>

Editor: Mark Molesworth  
328-4474  
[epmadmin@state.nd.us](mailto:epmadmin@state.nd.us)

Graphic Design: Deborah Mosset

#### ND Enterprise Project Management Advisory Group

Dave Eckenrode  
Information Technology Department

Mike Fisher  
Department of Human Services

Cheryl Gessele  
Office of Attorney General

Jennifer Kunz  
Information Technology Department

Mark Molesworth  
Information Technology Department

Rich Lehn  
University of North Dakota

Todd Metzger  
Department of Transportation

Heather Raschke  
Job Service North Dakota